

THE
Distress'd MOTHER.

A
TRAGEDY.

Written by Mr. *PHILIPS*.

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PROLOGUE,

Written by Mr. STEELE,

Spoken by Mr. WILKS.

SINCE Fancy of itself is louse and vain,
The Wise by Rules that airy Pow'r restrain :
They think those Writers mad, who, at their ease,
Convey this House and Audience where they please :
Who Nature's stated Distances confound,
And make this Spot all Soils the Sun goes round :
'Tis nothing, when a fancy'd Scene's in view,
To skip from Covent-Garden to Peru.

But Shakespear's self transgress'd ; and shall each Elf,
Each Pigmy-Genius, quote great Shakespear's self !
What Critic dares prescribe what's just and fit,
Or mark out Limits for such boundless Wit !
Shakespear could travel thro' Earth, Sea, and Air,
And paint out all the Pow'rs and Wonders there ;
In barren Desarts he makes Nature smile,
And gives us Feasts in his Enchanted Isle.

Our Author does his feeble Force confess,
Nor dares pretend such Merit to transgress ;
Does not such shining Gifts of Genius share,
And therefore makes Propriety his Care ;
Your Treat with study'd Decency he serves,
Not only Rules of Time and Place preserves,
But strives to keep his Characters intire,
With French Correctness and with British Fire.

This Piece, presented in a foreign Tongue,
When France was glorious and her Monarch young,
A hundred Times a crowded Audience drew,
A hundred Times repeated still 'twas new.

Pyrrhus provok'd, to no wild Rants betray'd.
Repents his generous Love so ill repaid ;
Does like a Man resent, a Prince upbraid.

His

*His Sentiments disclose a Royal Mind,
Nor is he known a King from Guards behind.*

*Injur'd Hermione demands Relief,
But not from heavy Narratives of Grief;
In conscious Majesty her Pride is shewn,
Born to ~~avenge~~ her Wrongs, but not bemoan.*

*Andromache——if in our Author's Lines,
As in the great Original, she shines,
Nothing but from Barbarity she Fears,
Attend with Silence, you'll applaud with Tears.*

Dramatis Personæ.

M E N.

Pyrrhus, the son of *Achilles*, and king of *Epirus*, in love with *Andromache*, but betrothed to *Hermione*.

Phœnix, counsellor to *Pyrrhus*.

Orestes, the son of *Agamemnon*, ambassador from the Greeks to *Pyrrhus*, in love with *Hermione*.

Pyllades, friend to *Orestes*, separated from him in a storm, driven on the coasts of *Epirus*, and detained by contrary winds in the court of *Pyrrhus*.

W O M E N.

Andromache, *Hector's* widow, captive to *Pyrrhus*, and mother to *Ashtanax*.

Cephisa, confidante to *Andromache*.

Hermione, daughter to *Menelaus* and betrothed to *Pyrrhus*.

Cleone, confidante to *Hermione*.

Attendants to Pyrrhus and Orestes, &c.

S C E N E, *a great Hall in the Court of Pyrrhus, at Burthrotos the capital City of Epirus.*

T H E

T H E

D I S T R E S S ' D M O T H E R ,

A C T I . S C E N E I .

Enter ORESTES and PYLADES.

O R E S T E S .

O *Pylades!* what's life without a friend!
At sight of thee my gloomy soul cheers up,
My hopes revive, and gladness dawns within
me.

After an absence of six tedious moons,
How could I hope to find my *Pylades*,
My joy, my comfort! on this fatal shore?
Ev'n in the court of *Pyrrhus*? in these realms,
These hated realms, so cross to all my wishes:
Oh, my brave friend! may no blind stroke of fate
Divide us more, and tear me from myself.

Pyl. O Prince! O my *Orestes*! O my friend!——
Thus let me speak the welcome of my heart. [*Embracing.*
Since I have gain'd this unexpected meeting,
Bless'd be the pow'rs who barr'd my way to *Greece*,
And kept me here, e'er since th' unhappy day,
When wafting winds (*Epirus* full in view)
Sunder'd our barks on the loud stormy main.

Orest. It was, indeed, a morning full of horror.

Pyl. A thousand boding cares have rack'd my soul
In your behalf. Often, with tears, I mourn'd
The fatal ills in which your life's involv'd,
And grudg'd you dangers which I could not share.

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I fear'd to what extremes the black despair,
That prey'd upon your mind, might have betray'd you,
And lest the gods, in pity to your woes,
Should hear your pray'rs, and take the life you loath'd.
But now with joy I see you! — the retinue
And numerous followers, that surround you here,
Speak better fortunes, and a mind dispos'd
To relish life.

Orest. Alas! my friend, who knows
The destiny to which I stand reserv'd!
I come in search of an inhuman fair,
And live or die as she decrees my fate.

Pyl. You much surprise me, prince! — I thought
you cur'd

Of your unpity'd unsuccessful passion.
Why, in *Epirus*, should you hope to find
Hermione less cruel than at *Sparta*?
I thought her pride, and the disdainful manner,
In which she treated all your constant sufferings,
Had broke your fetters and assur'd your freedom:
Asham'd of your repulse, and slighted vows,
You hated her; you talk'd of her no more.
Prince, you deceiv'd me.

Orest. I deceiv'd myself.
Do not upbraid th' unhappy man that loves thee.
Thou know'st I never hid my passion from thee:
Thou saw'st it in its birth and in its progress.
And when, at last, the hoary king, her father,
Great *Menelaus*, gave away his daughter,
His lovely daughter, to this happy *Pyrrhus*,
Th' avenger of his wrongs; thou saw'st my grief,
My torture, my despair; and how I dragg'd,
From sea to sea, a heavy chain of woes.
O *Pylades*! my heart has bled within me,
To see thee, press'd with sorrows not thy own,
Still wand'ring with me, like a banish'd man.
Watchful and anxious for thy wretched friend,

To



THE DISTRESS'D MOTHER. 7

To temper the wild transports of my mind,
And save me from myself.

Pyl. Why thus unkind ?

Why will you envy me the pleasing tasks
Of gen'rous love and sympathising friendship ?

Orest. Thou miracle of truth !—But hear me on.

When, in the midst of my disastrous fate,
I thought how the divine *Hermione*,
Deaf to my vows, regardless of my plaints,
Gave up herself, in all her charms, to *Pyrrhus*,
Thou may'st remember I abhorr'd her name,
Strove to forget her and repay her scorn.
I made my friends, and even myself, believe
My soul was freed. Alas ! I did not see
That all the malice of my heart was love.
Triumphing thus, and yet a captive still,
In *Greece*, I landed, and in *Greece* I found
Th' assembled princes all alarm'd with fears
In which their common safety seem'd concern'd.
I join'd them ; for I hop'd that war and glory
Might fill my mind, and take up all my thoughts
And that my shattered soul, impair'd with grief,
Once more would reassume its wonted vigour,
And ev'ry idle passion quit my breast.

Pyl. The thought was worthy *Agamemnon's* son.

Orest. But see the strange perverseness of my stars,
Which throws me on the rock I strove to shun !
The jealous chiefs, and all the states of *Greece*,
With one united voice, complain of *Pyrrhus*,
That now, forgetful of the promise given,
And, mindless of his godlike father's fate,
Astyanax he nurses in his court ;
Astyanax, the young surviving hope
Of ruin'd *Troy* ; *Astyanax*, descended
From a long race of kings, great *Hector's* son.

Pyl. A name still dreadful in the ears of *Greece* !
But, prince, you'll cease to wonder why the child
Lives thus protected in the court of *Pyrrhus*,
When you shall hear the bright *Andromache*,

His

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His lovely captive, charms him from his purpose :
The mother's beauty guards the helpless son.

Orest. Your tale confirms what I have heard, and
hence

Spring all my hopes. Since my proud rival woes
Another partner to his throne and bed,
Hermione may still be mine. Her father,
The injur'd *Menelaus*, thinks already
His daughter slighted, and th' intended nuptials
Too long delay'd. I heard his loud complaints
With secret pleasure, and was glad to find
Th' ungrateful maid neglected in her turn,
And all my wrongs aveng'd in her disgrace.

Pyl. Oh, may you keep your just resentments warm!

Orest. Resentments! Oh, my friend, too soon I found
They grew not out of hatred! I'm betray'd :
I practise on myself, and fondly plot
My own undoing. Goaded on by love,
I canvass'd all the suffrages of *Greece* ;
And here I come, their sworn ambassador,
To speak their jealousies and claim this boy.

Pyl. *Pyrrhus* will treat your embassy with scorn ;
Full of *Achilles*, his redoubted fire,
Pyrrhus is proud, impetuous, headstrong, fierce,
Made up of passions : will he then be sway'd,
And give to death the son of her he loves ?

Orest. Oh, would he render up *Hermione*,
And keep *Astyanax*, I should be blest'd !
He must ; he shall : *Hermione* is my life,
My soul, my rapture !——I'll no longer crub
The strong desire that hurries me to madness :
I'll give a loose to love ; I'll bear her hence ;
I'll tear her from his arms ; I'll——O, ye gods,
Give me *Hermione*, or let me die !——
But tell me, *Pylades*, how stand my hopes ?
Is *Pyrrhus* still enamour'd with her charms ?
Or dost thou think he'll yield me up the prize,
The dear, dear prize which he has ravish'd from me ?

Pyl.

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Pyl. I dare not flatter your fond hopes so far ;
The king indeed, cold to the *Spartan* princess,
Turns all his passion to *Andromache*,
Hector's afflicted widow ; but in vain,
With interwoven love and rage, he sues
The charming captive, obstinately cruel.
Oft he alarms her for her child confin'd
Apart ; and, when her tears begin to flow,
As soon he stops them, and recalls his threats.
Hermione a thousand times has seen
His ill requited vows return to her,
And takes his indignation all for love.
What can be gather'd from a man so various ?
He may, in the disorder of his soul,
Wed her he hates, and punish her he loves.

Orest. But tell me how the wrong'd *Hermione*
Brooks her slow nuptials and dishonour'd charms

Pyl. *Hermione* would fain be thought to scorn
Her wavering lover, and disdain his falshood ;
But, spite of all her pride and conscious beauty,
She mourns in secret her neglected charms,
And oft has made me privy to her tears :
Still threatens to be gone, yet still she stays,
And sometimes sighs and wishes for *Orestes*.

Orest. Ah, were those wishes from her heart, my
friend,

I'd fly in transport——

[*Flourish within.*]

Pyl. Hear !——the king approaches
To give you audience. Speak your embassy
Without reserve : urge the demands of *Greece*
And, in the name of all her kings, require
That *Hector*'s son be given into your hands.
Pyrrhus, instead of granting what they ask,
To speed his love, and win the *Trojan* dame,
Will make it merit to preserve her son.
But, see, he comes !

Orest. Mean while, my *Pylades*,
Go, and dispose *Hermione* to see

B

Her

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Her lover, who is come thus far to throw
Himself, in all his sorrows, at her feet.

SCENE II.

ORESTES, PYRRHUS, and PHOENIX.

Orest. Before I speak the message of the *Greeks*,
Permit me, Sir, to glory in the title
Of their ambassador, since I behold
Troy's vanquisher, and great *Achilles'* son;
Nor does the son rise short of such a father;
If *Hector* fell by him, *Troy* fell by you;
But what your father never would have done
You do. You cherish the remains of *Troy*,
And, by an ill-tim'd pity, keep alive
The dying embers of a ten years war.
Have you so soon forgot the mighty *Hector*?
The *Greeks* remember his high-brandish'd sword,
That fill'd their states with widows and with orphans,
For which they call for vengeance on his son.
Who knows what he may one day prove? who knows
But he may brave us in our ports, and, fill'd
With *Hector's* fury, set our fleets on blaze?
You may, yourself, live to repent your mercy.
Comply, then, with the *Grecians* just demands,
Sate their vengeance, and preserve yourself.
Pyr. The *Greeks* are for my safety more concern'd
Than I desire. I thought your kings were met
On more important council. When I heard
The name of their ambassador, I hop'd
Some glorious enterprise was taking birth.
Is *Agamemnon's* son dispatch'd for this?
And do the *Grecian* chiefs, renown'd in war,
A race of heroes, join in close debate
To plot an infant's death?—what right has *Greece*
To ask his life? must I, must I alone,
Of all her sceptred warriors, be deny'd

To

To treat my captive as I please? Know, prince,
 When *Troy* lay smoking on the ground, and each
 Proud victor shar'd the harvest of the war,
Andromache and this her son were mine;
 Were mine by lot: and who shall wrest them from me?
Ulysses bore away old *Priam's* queen;
Cassandra was your own great father's prize:
 Did I concern myself in what they won?
 Did I send embassies to claim their captives?

Orest. But, Sir, we fear, for you and for ourselves,
Troy may again revive, and a new *Hector*
 Rise in *Ajyanax*. Then think betimes——

Pyr. Let dastard souls be timorously wise:
 But tell them *Pyrrhus* knows not how to form
 Far-fancy'd ills and dangers out of sight.

Orest. Sir, call to mind th' unrival'd strength of *Troy*,
 Her walls, her bulwarks, and her gates of brass;
 Her kings, her heroes, and embattled armies!

Pyr. I call them all to mind, and see them all
 Confus'd in dust, all mix'd in one wide ruin,
 All but a child, and he in bondage held.
 What vengeance can we fear from such a *Troy*?
 If they have sworn to extinguish *Hector's* race,
 Why was their vow for twelve long months deferr'd?
 Why was he not in *Priam's* bosom slain?
 He should have fallen among the slaughter'd heaps
 Whelm'd under *Troy*. His death had then been just,
 When age and infancy, alike in vain,
 Plead'd their weakness; when the heat of conquest,
 And horrors of the night, rous'd all our rage,
 And blindly hurry'd us thro' scenes of death.
 My fury then was without bounds: but now,
 My wrath appeas'd, must I be cruel still?
 And, deaf to all the tender calls of pity,
 Like a cool murderer, bathe my hands in blood?
 An infant's blood?—no, prince,—go, bid the *Greeks*
 Mark out some other victim; my revenge

Has

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Has had its fill. What has escap'd from *Troy*
Shall not be sav'd to perish in *Epirus*.

Orest. I need not tell you, Sir, *Alyanax*
Was doom'd to death in *Troy*, nor mention how
The crafty mother sav'd her darling son ;
The *Greeks* do now but urge their former sentence ;
Nor is't the boy, but *Hector*, they pursue ;
The father draws their vengeance on the son :
The father, who so oft in *Grecian* blood
Has drench'd his sword : the father, whom the *Greeks*
May seek even here.—Prevent them, Sir, in time.

Pyr. No ! let them come, since I was born to wage
Eternal wars. Let them now turn their arms
On him who conquer'd for them : let them come
And in *Epirus* seek another *Troy*.
'Twas thus they recompens'd my god-like fire ;
Thus was *Achilles* thank'd ; but, prince, remember,
Their black ingratitude then cost them dear.

Orest. Shall *Greece* then find a rebel son in *Pyrrhus* ?

Pyr. Have I then conquer'd to depend on *Greece* ?

Orest. *Hermione* will sway your soul to peace,
And mediate 'twixt her father and yourself :
Her beauty will enforce my embassy.

Pyr. *Hermione* may have her charms, and I
May love her still, tho' not her father's slave.
I may in time give proofs that I'm a lover ;
But never must forget that I'm a king.
Mean while, Sir, you may see fair *Helen's* daughter,
I know how near in blood you stand ally'd,
That done, you have my answer, prince. The *Greeks*
No doubt expect your quick return.

S C E N E III.

PYRRHUS and PHOENIX.

Phæn. Sir, do you send your rival to the princess ?

Pyr. I'm told that he has lov'd her long.

Phæn.

Phæn. If so,
Have you not cause to fear the smother'd flame
May kindle at her sight, and blaze anew,
And she be wrought to listen to his passion?

Pyr. Ay, let them, *Phænix*, let them love their fill;
Let them go hence; let them depart together;
Together let them sail for *Sparta*: all my ports
Are open to them both. From what constraint,
What irksom thoughts should I be then reliev'd!

Phæn. But, Sir——

Pyr. I shall another time, good *Phænix*,
Unbosom to thee all my thoughts,—for, see,
Andromache appears.

SCENE IV.

PYRRHUS, ANDROMACHE, and CEPHISA.

Pyr. May I, Madam,
Flatter my hopes so far, as to believe
You come to seek me here?

Andro. This way, Sir, leads
To those apartments where you guard my son.
Since you permit me once a-day to visit
All I have left of *Heſtor* and of *Troy*,
I go to weep a few sad moments with him.
I have not yet to-day embrac'd my child;
I have not held him in my widow'd arms.

Pyr. Ah, Madam! should the threats of *Greece* pre-
vail
You'll have occasion for your tears indeed!

Andro. Alas! what threats? what can alarm the
Greeks?

There are no *Trojans* left!

Pyr. Their hate to *Heſtor*
Can never die: the terror of his name
Still shakes their souls, and makes them dread his son.

Andro. A mighty honour for victorious *Greece*
To fear an infant, a poor, friendless child!

Who

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Who smiles in bondage, nor yet knows himself
The son of *Hector* and the slave of *Pyrrhus*.

Pyr. Weak as he is, the *Greeks* demand his life,
And send no less than *Agamemnon's* son
To fetch him hence.

Andro. And, Sir, do you comply
With such demands !—this blow is aim'd at me :
How should the child avenge his slaughter'd sire ?
But, cruel men ! they will not have him live
To cheer my heavy heart and ease my bonds.
I promis'd to myself in him a son,
In him a friend, a husband, and a father.
But I must suffer sorrow heap'd on sorrow,
And still the fatal stroke must come from you.

Pyr. Dry up those tears : I must not see you weep:
And know I have rejected their demands.
The *Greeks* already threaten me with war :
But, should they arm, as once they did for *Helen*,
And hide the *Adriatic* with their fleets,
Should they prepare a second ten years siege,
And lay my tow'rs and palaces in dust,
I am determin'd to defend your son,
And rather die myself than give him up.
But, Madam, in the midst of all those dangers,
Will you refuse me a propitious smile ?
Hated of *Greece*, and press'd on every side,
Let me not, Madam, while I fight your cause,
Let me not combat with your cruelties,
And count *Andromache* amongst my foes.

Andro. Consider, Sir, how this will sound in *Greece*.
How can so great a soul betray such weakness ?
Let not men say so generous a design
Was but the transport of a heart in love.

Pyr. Your charms will justify me to the world.

Andro. How can *Andromache*, a captive queen,
O'erwhelm'd with grief, a burden to herself,
Harbour a thought of love ? alas ! what charms
Have these unhappy eyes by you condemn'd

THE DISTRESS'D MOTHER. 15

To weep for ever ?——talk of it no more——
 To reverence the misfortunes of a foe ;
 To succour the distress'd ; to give the son
 To an afflicted mother ; to repel
 Confederate nations leagu'd against his life,
 Unbrib'd by love, untterrify'd by threats,
 To pity, to protect him : these are cares,
 These are exploits worthy *Achilles'* son.

Pyr. Will your resentments, then, endure for ever ?
 Must *Pyrrhus* never be forgiven ?——'tis true,
 My sword has often reek'd in *Phrygian* blood,
 And carry'd havock through your royal kindred :
 But you, fair princess, amply have aveng'd
 Old *Priam's* vanquish'd house, and all the woes
 I brought on them fall short of what I suffer.
 We both have suffer'd in our turns, and now
 Our common foes should teach us to unite.

Andro. Where does the captive not behold a foe ?

Pyr. Forget that term of hatred, and behold
 A friend in *Pyrrhus* ! give me but to hope,
 I'll free your son ; I'll be a father to him :
 Myself will teach him to avenge the *Trojans*.
 I'll go in person to chastise the *Greeks*,
 Both for your wrongs and mine. Inspired by you
 What wou'd I not atchieve ? again shall *Troy*
 Rise from its ashes : this right arm shall fix
 Her seat of empire ; and your son shall reign.

Andro. Such dreams of greatness suit not my condition :

His hopes of empire perish'd with his father.
 No ; thou imperial city, ancient *Troy*,
 Thou pride of *Asia*, founded by the gods,
 Never, Oh ! never must we hope to see
 Those bulwarks rise which *Hector* could not guard ! —
 Sir, all I wish for is some quiet exile,
 Where, far from *Greece* remov'd, and far from you,
 I may conceal my son, and mourn my husband.
 Your love creates me envy. Oh, return !
 Return to your betroth'd *Hermione*.

Pyr.

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Pyr. Why do you mock me thus? you know I cannot.

You know my heart is yours : my soul hangs on you ;
You take up every wish ; my waking thoughts
And nightly dreams are all employ'd on you.
'Tis true *Hermione* was sent to share
My throne and bed, and would with transport hear
The vows which you neglect.

Andro. She has no *Troy*,
No *Hector* to lament : she has not lost
A husband by your conquests : such a husband !
(Tormenting thought!) whose death alone has made
Your fire immortal : *Pyrrhus* and *Achilles*
Are both grown great by my calamities.

Pyr. Madam, 'tis well ! 'tis very well ! I find
Your will must be obey'd : imperious captive,
It shall, henceforth I blot you from my mind :
You teach me to forget your charms ; to hate you.
For know, inhuman beauty, I have lov'd
Too well to treat you with indifference.
Think well upon it : my disorder'd soul
Wavers between th' extremes of love and rage.
I've been too tame ; I will awake to vengeance!
The son shall answer for the mother's scorn.
The *Greeks* demand him : nor will I endanger
My realms to please a proud ungrateful woman.

Andro. Then he must die ! alas, my son must die !
He has no friend, no succour left, beside
His mother's tears and his own innocence.

Pyr. Go, Madam, visit this unhappy son.
The sight of him may bend your stubborn heart,
And turn to softness your unjust disdain.
I shall once more expect your answer. Go,
And think, while you embrace the captive boy,
Think that his life depends on your resolves.

SCENE

SCENE V.

ANDROMACHE and CEPHISA.

Andro. I'll go, and in the anguish of my heart
Weep o'er my child——if he must die, my life
Is wrapt in his, I shall not long survive.
'Tis for his sake that I have suffer'd life,
Groan'd in captivity, and out liv'd *Hector*.
Yes, my *Asiyanax*; we'll go together!
Together to the realms of night we'll go!
There to thy ravish'd eyes thy fire I'll shew,
And point him out among the shades below.

ACT II. SCENE I.

HERMIONE and CLEONE.

HERMIONE.

WELL, I'll be rul'd, *Cleone*: I will see him;
I have told *Pylades* that he may bring him:
But, trust me, were I left to my own thoughts
I should forbid him yet.

Cle. And why forbid him?
Is he not, Madam, still the same *Orestes*?
Orestes whose return you oft have wish'd?
The man whose sufferings you so oft lamented,
And often prais'd his constancy and love?

Her. That love, that constancy, so ill requited,
Upbraids me to myself: I blush to think
How I have us'd him, and would shun his presence.
What will be my confusion when he sees me
Neglected and forsaken like himself?
Will he not say, Is this the scornful maid,
The proud *Hermione*, that tyranniz'd

C

In

18 THE DISTRESS'D MOTHER.

In *Sparta's* court, and triumph'd in her charms ?
Her insolence at last is well repaid.
I cannot bear the thought.

Cle. You wrong yourself
With unbecoming fears. He knows too well
Your beauty and your worth. Your lover comes not
To offer insults, but repeat his vows,
And breathe his ardent passion at your feet.
But, Madam, what's your royal father's will ?
What orders do your letters bring from *Sparta* ?

Her. His orders are, if *Pyrrhus* still delay
The nuptials, and refuse to sacrifice
This *Trojan* boy, I should with speed embark,
And with their embassy return to *Greece*.

Cle. What would you more ? *Orestes* comes in time
To save your honour. *Pyrrhus* cools apace :
Prevent his falshood, and forsake him first.
I know you hate him : you have told me so.

Her. Hate him : my injur'd honour bids me hate
him :

The ungrateful man to whom I fondly gave
My virgin heart ! the man I lov'd so dearly !
The man I doted on ! Oh, my *Cleone* !
How is it possible I should not hate him ?

Cle. Then give him over, Madam. Quit his court,
And with *Orestes*——

Her. No ! I must have time
To work up all my rage ! to meditate
A parting full of horror ! my revenge
Will be but too much quicken'd by the traitor.

Cle. Do you then wait new insults ? new affronts ?
To draw you from your father ! then to leave you !
In his own court to leave you——for a captive !
If *Pyrrhus* can provoke you, he has done it.

Her. Why dost thou heighten my distress ? I fear
To search out my own thoughts, and sound my heart.
Be blind to what thou seest : believe me cur'd :
Flatter my weakness ; tell me I have conquer'd :

Think

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Think that my injur'd soul is set against him,
And do thy best to make me think so too.

Cle. Why would you loiter here, then?

Her. Let us fly!

Let us be gone! I leave him to his captive:
Let him go kneel and supplicate his slave.
Let us be gone!—but what if he repent?
What if the perjur'd prince again submit
And sue for pardon? what if he renew
His former vows?—but, Oh the faithless man!
He flights me! drives to extremities!—however,
I'll stay, *Cleone*, to perplex their loves:
I'll stay, till, by an open breach of contract,
I make him hateful to the *Greeks*. Already
Their vengeance have I drawn upon the son:
Their second embassy shall claim the mother:
I will redouble all my griefs upon her!

Cle. Ah, Madam, whither does your rage transport
you?

Andromache, alas, is innocent!

A woman plung'd in sorrow, dead to love,
And when she thinks of *Pyrrhus* 'tis with horror.

Her. Would I had done so too!—he had not, then,
Betray'd my easy faith.—But I, alas!
Discover'd all the fondness of my soul;
I made no secret of my passion to him:
Nor thought it dangerous to be sincere.
My eyes, my tongue, my actions spoke my heart.

Cle. Well might you speak, without reserve, to one
Engag'd to you by solemn oaths and treaties.

Her. His ardour too was an excuse to mine:
With other eyes he saw me then!—*Cleone*,
Thou may'st remember every thing conspir'd
To favour him: my father's wrongs aveng'd;
The *Greeks* triumphant; fleets of *Trojan* spoils;
His mighty fire's, his own immortal fame;
His eager love;—all, all conspir'd against me!
—But I have done:—I'll think no more of *Pyrrhus*.

Orestes

20 THE DISTRESS'D MOTHER.

Orestes wants not merit, and he loves me ;
My gratitude, my honour, both plead for him :
And, if I've pow'r o'er my own heart, 'tis his.

Cle. Madam, he comes——

Her. Alas ! I did not think
He was so near !—I wish I might not see him !

SCENE II.

HERMIONE, CLEONE, and ORESTES.

Her. How am I to interpret, Sir, this visit ?
Is it a compliment of form, or love !

Orest. Madam, you know my weakness. 'Tis my
fate

To love unpity'd ; to desire to see you,
And still to swear each time shall be the last.
My passion breaks through my repeated oaths,
And every time I visit you I'm perjur'd.
Ev'n now I find my wounds all bleed afresh :
I blush to own it, but I know no cure.
I call the gods to witness I have try'd
Whatever man could do (but try'd in vain
To wear you from my mind. Through stormy seas
And savage climes, in a whole year of absence,
I courted dangers and I long'd for death.

Her. Why will you, prince, indulge this mournful
tale ?

It ill becomes th' ambassador of *Greece*
To talk of dying, and of love. Remember
The kings you represent. Shall their revenge
Be disappointed by your ill-tim'd passion ?
Discharge your embassy : 'tis not *Orestes*
The *Greeks* desire should die.

Orest. My embassy
Is at an end : for *Pyrrhus* has refus'd
To give up *Hector's* son. Some hidden pow'r
Protects the boy.

Her.

Her. Faithless, ungrateful man !

[*Aside.*

Orest. I now prepare for *Greece*. But, ere I go,
Wou'd hear my final doom pronounc'd by you.

What do I say ?——I do already hear it !

My doom is fix'd : I read it in your eyes.

Her. Will you then still despair ? be still suspicious ?
What have I done ? wherein have I been cruel ?

'Tis true you find me in the court of *Pyrrhus*,

But 'twas my royal father sent me hither.

And who can tell but I have shar'd your griefs ?

Have I ne'er wept in secret ? never wish'd

To see *Orestes* ?——

Orest. Wish'd to see *Orestes* !

Oh joy ! Oh ecstasy ! my soul's intranc'd !

Oh charming princefs ! Oh transcendent maid !

My utmost wish !——thus, thus let me express

My boundless thanks !——I never was unhappy—

Am I *Orestes* ?——

Her. You are *Orestes* :

The same unalter'd, gen'rous, faithful lover ;

The prince whom I esteem, whom I lament,

And whom I fain would teach my heart to love !

Orest. Ay, there it is !——I have but your esteem ;
While *Pyrrhus* has your heart !

Her. Believe me, prince,

Were you as *Pyrrhus* I should hate you !

Orest. No !——

I should be blest ! I should be lov'd as he is !——

Yet all this while I die by your disdain,

While he neglects your charms and courts another.

Her. And who has told you, prince, that I'm ne-
glected ?

Has *Pyrrhus* said—(Oh, I shall grow distracted !)

Has *Pyrrhus* told you so ?——or is it you

Who think thus meanly of me ?——Sir, perhaps,

All do not judge like you !——

Orest. Madam, go on !

Insult me still : I am us'd to bear your scorn.

Her.

my

is

al

Her.

22 THE DISTRESS'D MOTHER.

Her. Why am I told how *Pyrrhus* loves or hates ?
—Go, prince, and arm the *Greeks* against the rebel ;
Let them lay waste his country, raze his towns,
Destroy his fleets, his palaces——himself !——
Go, prince, and tell me then how much I love him.

Orest. To hasten his destruction come yourself,
And work your royal father to his ruin.

Her. Mean while he weds *Andromache* !

Orest. Ah, prince's !

What is't I hear ?

Her. What infamy for *Greece*

If he should wed a *Phrygian*, and a captive !

Orest. Is this your hatred, Madam ?—'tis in vain
To hide your passion ; ev'ry thing betrays it :
Your looks, your speech, your anger, nay, your silence ;
Your love appears in all ; your secret flame
Breaks out the more, the more you wou'd conceal it.

Her. Your jealousy perverts my meaning still,
And wrests each circumstance to your disquiet ;
My very hate is construed into fondness.

Orest. Impute my fears, if groundless, to my love.

Her. Then hear me, prince. Obedience to a father
First brought me hither, and the same obedience
Detains me here till *Pyrrhus* drive me hence,
Or my offended father shall recall me.
Tell this proud king, that *Menelaus* scorns
To match his daughter with a foe of *Greece* :
Bid him resign *Astyanax*, or me.
If he persist to guard the hostile boy,
Hermione embarks with you for *Sparta*.

S C E N E III.

ORESTES alone.

Then is *Orestes* blest'd ! my griefs are fled !
Fled like a dream !—methinks I tread in air !
Pyrrhus, enamour'd of his captive queen,

Will

Will thank me if I take her rival hence.
 He looks not on the princess with my eyes!
 Surprising happiness!—unlook'd-for joy!
 Never let love despair!—the prize is mine!
 Be smooth, ye seas; and, ye propitious winds,
 Breathe from *Epirus* to the *Spartan* coasts!
 I long to view the sails unfurl'd—but, see!
Pyrrhus approaches in a happy hour.

SCENE IV.

ORESTES, PYRRHUS and PHOENIX.

Pyr. I was in pain to find you, prince. My warm
 Ungovern'd temper would not let me weigh
 Th' importance of your embassy, and hear
 You argue for my good.—I was to blame—
 I since have pois'd your reasons, and I thank
 My good allies: their care deserves my thanks.
 You have convinc'd me that the weal of *Greece*,
 My father's honour, and my own repose,
 Demand that *Hector's* race should be destroy'd.
 I shall deliver up *Alyanax*,
 And you yourself shall bear the victim hence.

Orest. If you approve it, Sir, and are content
 To spill the blood of a defenceless child,
 The offended *Greeks*, no doubt, will be pleas'd.

Pyr. Closer to strain the knot of our alliance
 I have determin'd to espouse *Hermione*;
 You come in time to grace our nuptial rites:
 In you the kings of *Greece* will all be present,
 And you have right to personate her father,
 As his ambassador and brother's son.
 Go, prince, renew your visit; tell *Hermione*
 To morrow I receive her from your hands.

Orest. [*Aside.*] O change of fortune! Oh undone
Orestes!

SCENE

SCENE V.

• PYRRHUS and PHOENIX.

Pyr. Well, *Phoenix* ! am I still a slave to love !
What think'st thou now ? am I myself again ?

Phæn. 'Tis as it should be ; this discovers *Pyrrhus* ;
Shews all the hero : now you are yourself !
The son ! the rival of the great *Achilles* !
Greece will applaud you, and the world confels
Pyrrhus has conquer'd *Troy* a second time !

Pyr. Nay, *Phoenix*, now I but begin to triumph :
I never was a conqueror till now !
Believe me, a whole host, a war of foes
May sooner be subdu'd than love. O *Phoenix* !
What ruin have I shunn'd ? the *Greeks*, enrag'd,
Hung o'er me like a gath'ring storm, and soon
Had burst in thunder on my head, while I
Abandon'd duty, empire, honour, all,
To please a thankless woman ! — one kind look
Had quite undone me !

Phæn. O, my royal master !
The gods, in favour to you, made her cruel.

Pyr. Thou saw'st with how much scorn she treated
me !

When I permitted her to see her son,
I hop'd it might have work'd her to my wishes.
I went to see the mournful interview,
And found her bath'd in tears, and lost in passion.
Wild with distress, a thousand times she call'd
On *Hector*'s name : and when I spoke in comfort,
And promis'd my protection to her son,
She kiss'd the boy, and call'd again on *Hector* :
Then strain'd him in her arms, and cry'd, 'Tis he !
'Tis he himself ! his eyes, his ev'ry feature !
His very frown and his stern look already !
'Tis he ! 'tis my lov'd Lord, whom I embrace ! —

Does

THE DISTRESS'D MOTHER. 25

Does she then think that I preserve the boy
To sooth and keep alive her flame for *Hector*?

Phæn. No doubt she does, and thinks you favour'd
in it :

But let her go for an ungrateful woman !

Pyr. I know the thoughts of her proud stubborn
heart :

Vain of her charms, and insolent in beauty,
She mocks my rage, and, when it threatens loudest,
Expects 'twill soon be humbled into love.

But we shall change our parts, and she shall find
I can be deaf like her, and steel my heart :

She is *Hector*'s widow, I *Achilles*' son.

Pyr. *Pyrrhus* is born to hate *Andromache*.

Phæn. My royal master, talk of her no more :
I do not like this anger. Your *Hermione*
Should now engross your thoughts. 'Tis time to see
her.

'Tis time you should prepare the nuptial rites,
And not rely upon a rival's care :
It may be dangerous.

Pyr. But tell me, *Phænix*,
Dost thou not think the proud *Andromache*
Will be enrag'd when I shall wed the princess ?

Phæn. Why does *Andromache* still haunt your
thoughts ?

What is't to you be she enrag'd or pleas'd ?
Let her name perish : think of her no more !

Pyr. No, *Phænix* !——I have been too gentle with
her.

I've check'd my wrath and stiff'd my resentments :
She knows not yet to what degree I hate her.
Let us return :——I'll brave her to her face :
I'll give my anger its free course against her.

Thou shalt see, *Phænix*, how I'll break her pride !

Phæn. Oh, go not, Sir !——there's ruin in her eyes !
You do not know your strength : you'll fall before her,
Adore her beauty and revive her scorn.

D

Pyr.

26 THE DISTRESS'D MOTHER.

Pyr. That were indeed a most unmanly weakness!
Thou dost not know me, *Phœnix* !

Phœn. Ah, my prince,
You still are struggling in the toils of love.

Pyr. Canst thou then think I love this woman still?
One who repays my passion with disdain!
A stranger, captive, friendless and forlorn;
She and her darling son within my pow'r;
His life a forfeit to the *Greeks* : yet I
Preserve her son ; would take her to my throne ;
Would fight her battles and avenge her wrongs ;
And all this while she treats me as her foe !

Phœn. You have it in your pow'r to be reveng'd.

Pyr. Yes ;—and I'll shew my pow'r!—I'll give
her cause

To hate me ! her *Astyanax* shall die——
What tears will then be shed ! how will she then,
In bitterness of heart, reproach my name !
Then, to compleat her woes, will I espouse
Hermione—'twill stab her to the heart !

Phœn. Alas, you threaten like a lover still !

Pyr. *Phoenix*, excuse this struggle of my soul :
'Tis the last effort of expiring love.

Phœn. Then hasten, Sir, to see the *Spartan* princess,
And turn the bent of your desires on her.

Pyr. Oh, 'tis a heavy task to conquer love !
And wean the soul from her accustom'd fondness.
But, come :—a long farewell to *Hector's* widow.
'Tis with a secret pleasure I look back
And see the many dangers I have pass'd.
The merchant thus, in dreadful tempests tost,
Thrown by the waves on some unlook'd-for coast ;
Oft turns and sees, with a delighted eye,
Midst rocks and shelves the broken billows fly :
And, while the outrageous winds the deep deform,
Smiles on the tumult and enjoys the storm.

A C T

ACT III. SCENE I.

PYLADES and ORESTES.

. PYLADES.

FOR heav'n's sake, Sir, compose your ruffled mind,
And moderate your rage!

Orest. No, *Pylades*!

This is no time for counsel.—I am deaf.

Talk not of reason! I have been too patient.

Life is not worth my care. My soul grows desperate:

I'll bear her off, or perish in the attempt.

I'll force her from his arms:—by heav'n I will!

Pyl. Well; 'tis agreed, my friend:—we'll force her
hence,

But still consider we are in *Epirus*:

The court, the guards, *Hermione* herself,

The very air we breathe belongs to *Pyrrhus*.

Good gods! what tempted you to seek her here?

Orest. Lost to myself I knew not what I did!

My purposes were wild. Perhaps I came

To menace *Pyrrhus* and upbraid this woman.

Pyl. This violence of temper may prove fatal.

Orest. I must be more than man to bear these shocks,

These outrages of fate, with temper!

He tells me that he weds *Hermione*,

And will to morrow take her from my hand!—

My hand shall sooner tear the tyrant's heart——

Pyl. Your passion blinds you, Sir; he's not to blame,

Could you but look into the soul of *Pyrrhus*,

Perhaps you'd find it tortur'd like your own.

Orest. No, *Pylades*! 'tis all design.—his pride,

To triumph over me, has chang'd his love.

The fair, the bright *Hermione*, before I came,

In

28 THE DISTRESS'D MOTHER.

In all her bloom of beauty, was neglected.
 Ah cruel gods! I thought her all my own!
 She was consenting to return to *Sparta*:
 Her heart, divided betwixt rage and love,
 Was on the wing to take its leave of *Pyrrhus*.
 She heard my sighs, she pitied my complaints,
 She prais'd my constancy:—the least indifference
 From this proud king had made *Orestes* happy!

Pyl. So your fond heart believes!—

Orest. Did I not see
 Her hate, her rage, her indignation rise
 Against th' ungrateful man?

Pyl. Believe me, prince,
 'Twas then she lov'd him most! had *Pyrrhus* left her
 She would have form'd some new pretext to stay.
 Take my advice:—think not to force her hence:
 But fly yourself from her destructive charms.
 Her soul is link'd to *Pyrrhus*: were she your's
 She would reproach you still, and still regret
 Her disappointed nuptials—

Orest. I alk no more!
 I cannot bear the thought! she must be mine!
 Did *Pyrrhus* carry thunder in his hand
 I'd stand the bolt, and challenge all his fury,
 Ere I resign'd *Hermione*—by force
 I'll snatch her hence and bear her to my ships!
 Have we forgot her mother *Helen's* rape?

Pyl. Will then *Orestes* turn a *ravisher*,
 And blot his embassy?

Orest. O *Pylades*!
 My grief weighs heavy on me:—'twill distract me!
 O leave me to myself! let not thy friendship
 Involve thee in my woes. Too long already,
 Too long hast thou been punish'd for my crimes.
 It is enough, my friend!—it is enough!
 Let not thy generous love betray thee farther.
 The gods have set me as their mark to empty
 Their quivers on me.—leave me to myself.
 Mine be the danger, mine the enterprise.

All

THE DISTRESS'D MOTHER. 29

All I request of thee is to return,
And in my place convey *Alyanax*
(As *Pyrrhus* has consented) into *Greece*.
Go, *Pylades*——

Pyl. Lead on, my friend, lead on!
Let us bear off *Hermione*! no toil,
No danger can deter a friend;—lead on!
Draw up the *Greeks*: summon your num'rous train;
The ships are ready and the wind sits fair;
There eastward lyes the sea; the rolling waves
Break on those palace-stairs. I know each pass,
Each avenue and outlet of the court.
This very night we'll carry her on board.

Orest. Thou art too good!——I trespass on thy
friendship:

But, Oh! excuse a wretch whom no man pities
Except thyself; one just about to lose
The treasure of his soul, whom all mankind
Conspire to hate, and one who hates himself.
When will my friendship be of use to thee?

Pyl. The question is unkind.—But now remember
To keep your counsels close, and hide your thoughts:
Let not *Hermione* suspect——no more——
I see her coming, Sir——

Orest. Away, my friend;
I am advis'd; my all depends upon it.

SCENE II.

ORESTES, HERMIONE, and CLEONE.

Orest. Madam, your orders are obey'd; I've seen
Pyrrhus, my rival, and have gain'd him for you.
The king resolves to wed you.

Her. So I am told;
And farther, I am inform'd that you, *Orestes*,
Are to dispose me for th' intended marriage.

Orest.

30 THE DISTRESS'D MOTHER.

Orest. And are you, Madam, willing to comply?

Her. Could I imagine *Pyrrhus* lov'd me still?
After so long delays, who would have thought
His hidden flames would shew themselves at last,
And kindle in his breast when mine expir'd?
I can suppose, with you, he fears the *Greeks*,
That it is interest. and not love, directs him,
And that my eyes had greater pow'r o'er you.

Orest. No, princess, no! it is too plain he loves you.
Your eyes do what they will, and cannot fail
To gain a conquest where you wish they should.

Her. What can I do? alas!—my faith is promis'd:
Can I refuse what is not mine to give?
A princess is not at her choice to love;
All we have left us is a blind obedience:
And yet, you see, how far I had comply'd,
And made my duty yield to your intreaties.

Orest. Ah, cruel maid! you knew—but I have done.
All have a right to please themselves in love.
I blame you not. 'Tis true I hop'd:—but you
Are mistress of your heart, and I'm content
'Tis fortune is mine enemy, not you.
But, Madam, I shall spare your farther pain
On this uneasy theme, and take my leave.

SCENE III.

HERMIONE and CLEONE.

Her. *Cleone*, could'st thou think he'd be so calm!

Cle. Madam, his silent grief sits heavy on him.
He's to be pitied: his too eager love
Has made him busy to his own destruction.
His threats have wrought this change of mind on
Pyrrhus.

Her. Dost thou think *Pyrrhus* capable of fear?
Whom should the intrepid *Pyrrhus* fear? the *Greeks*!
Did he not lead their harass'd troops to conquest
When they despair'd, when they retir'd from *Troy*,
And

THE DISTRESS'D MOTHER. 31

And fought for shelter in their burning fleets ?
 Did he not then supply his father's place ?
 No ! my *Cleone*, he's above constraint :
 He acts unforc'd ; and, where he weds, he loves.

Gle Oh that *Orestes* had remain'd in *Greece* !
 I fear to-morrow will prove fatal to him.

Her. Wilt thou discourse of nothing but *Orestes* ?
Pyrrhus is mine again — is mine for ever !

Oh, my *Cleone* ! I am wild with joy ! —

Pyrrhus ! the bold ! the brave ! the godlike *Pyrrhus* !

— Oh, I could tell thee numberless exploits,
 And tire thee with his battles ! — Oh, *Cleone* —

Gle. Madam, conceal your joy, — I see *Andromache* :
 She weeps, and comes to speak her sorrows to you.

Her. I would indulge the gladness of my heart !
 Let us retire : her grief is out of season.

S C E N E IV.

ANDROMACHE, HERMIONE, CLEONE, and CEPHISA.

Andro. Ah, Madam ! whither, whither do you fly ?

Where can your eyes behold a sight more pleasing
 Than *Hector*'s widow suppliant and in tears ?

I come not an alarm'd, a jealous foe,

To envy you the heart your charms have won :

The only man I fought to please is gone,

Kill'd in my fight by an unhuman hand.

Hector first taught me love, which my fond heart
 Shall ever cherish till we meet in death.

But, oh, I have a son ! — and you, one day,

Will be no stranger to a mother's fondness :

But heav'n forbid that you should ever know

A mother's sorrow for an only son,

Her joy, her bliss, her last surviving comfort !

When ev'ry hour she trembles for his life.

Your pow'r o'er *Pyrrhus* may relieve my fears.

Alas !

32 THE DISTRESS'D MOTHER.

Alas ! what danger is there in a child
 Sav'd from the wreck of a whole ruin'd empire ?
 Let me go hide me in some desert Isle :
 You may rely upon my tender care
 To keep him far from perils of ambition :
 All he can learn of me will be to weep !

Her. Madam, 'tis easy to conceive your grief,
 But it would ill become me to solicit
 In contradiction to my father's will :
 'Tis he who urges to destroy your son.
 Madam, if *Pyrrhus* must be wrought to pity,
 No woman does it better than yourself :
 If you gain him, I shall comply of course.

SCENE V.

ANDROMACHE and CEPHISA.

Andro. Didst thou not mind with what disdain she
 spoke ?

Youth and prosperity have made her vain :
 She has not seen the fickle turns of life.

Ceph. Madam, were I as you, I'd take her counsel ;
 I'd speak my own distress : one look from you
 Will vanquish *Pyrrhus* and confound the *Greeks*——
 See, where he comes !——lay hold on this occasion.

SCENE VI.

PYRRHUS, ANDROMACHE, PHOENIX, and CEPHISA:

Pyr. Where is the princess ?—did you not inform me
Hermione was here ? [To Phoenix.

Phœn. I thought so, Sir.

Andro. Thou seest what mighty pow'r my eyes have
 on him !

[To Cephisa.
Pyr.

THE DISTRESS'D MOTHER. 33

Pyr. What says she, *Phoenix*?

Andro. I have no hope left!

Phoen. Let us be gone :—*Hermione* expects you.

Ceph. For heav'n's sake, Madam, break this sullen silence.

Andro. My child's already promised!——

Ceph. But not given.

Andro. No! no!——my tears are vain! his doom is fix'd!

Pyr. See, if she deigns to cast one look upon us!
Proud woman!

Andro. I provoke him by my presence.
Let us retire.

Pyr. Come, let us satisfy
The *Greeks*, and give them up this *Phrygian* boy.

Andro. Ah, Sir, recall those words!—what have you said?

If you give up my son, Oh! give up me——
You who so many times have sworn me friendship,
Oh heav'ns!—will you not look with pity on me?
Is there no hope? is there no room for pardon?

Pyr. *Phoenix* will answer you :—my word is past.

Andro. You who would brave so many dangers for me.

Pyr. I was your lover then :—I now am free.
To favour you I might have spar'd his life :
But you would ne'er vouchsafe to ask it of me.
Now 'tis too late.

Andro. Ah, Sir, you understood
My tears, my wishes, which I durst not utter,
Afraid of a repulse. Oh, Sir, excuse
The pride of royal blood, that checks my soul,
And knows not how to be importunate.
You know, alas! I was not born to kneel,
To sue for pity, and to own a master.

Pyr. No! in your heart you curse me! you disdain
My gen'rous flame, and scorn to be oblig'd!
This very son, this darling of your soul,

E

Would

34 THE DISTRESS'D MOTHER.

Would be less dear did I preserve him for you.
Your anger, your aversion falls on me ;
You hate me more than the whole league of Greece :
But I shall leave you to your great resentments.
Let us go, *Phoenix*, and appease the *Greeks*.

Andro. Then let me die ! and let me go to *Hector* !

Ceph. But, Madam——

Andro. What can I do more ? the tyrant
Sees my distraction, and insults my tears ! [*To Cephisa.*
—Behold how low you have reduc'd a queen !
'These eyes have seen my country laid in ashes,
My kindred fall in war, my father slain,
My husband dragg'd in his own blood, my son
Condemn'd to bondage, and myself a slave ;
Yet, in the midst of those unequall'd woes,
'Twas some relief to find myself your captive,
And that my son, deriv'd from ancient kings,
Since he must serve, had *Pyrrhus* for his master.
When *Priam* kneel'd the great *Achilles* wept :
I hop'd I should not find his son less noble :
I thought the brave were still the most compassionate.
Oh, do not, Sir, divide me from my child !——
If he must die——

Pyr. Phoenix, withdraw a while.

S C E N E VII.

PYRRHUS and ANDROMACHE.

Pyr. Rise, Madam.——yet you may preserve your son.

I find, whenever I provoke your tears,
I furnish you with arms against myself.
I thought my hatred fix'd before I saw you.
Oh ! turn your eyes upon me, while I speak
And see if you discover in my looks
An angry judge, or an obdurate foe.

Why

Why will you force me to desert your cause ?
 In your son's name I beg we may be friends :
 Let me intreat you to secure his life !
 Must I turn suppliant for him ? think, Oh ! think
 ('Tis the last time) you both may yet be happy !
 I know the tyes I break, the foes I arm :
 I wrong *Hermione*, I send her hence,
 And with her diadem I bind your brows.
 Consider well, for 'tis of moment to you ;
 Chuse to be wretched, Madam, or a queen.
 My soul, consum'd with a whole year's despair,
 Can bear no longer these perplexing doubts.
 Enough of sighs, and tears, and threats I've try'd :
 I know, if I'm depriv'd of you, I die :
 But, Oh ! I die if I wait longer for you !
 I leave you to your thoughts. When I return,
 We'll to the temple: there you'll find your son,
 And there be crown'd, or give him up for ever.

S C E N E VIII.

ANDROMACHE and CEPHISA.

Ceph. I told you, Madam, that, in spite of *Greece*,
 You would o'er-rule the malice of your fortune.

Andro. Alas, *Cephisa*, what have I obtain'd ?
 Only a poor short respite for my son.

Ceph. You have enough approv'd your faith to
Hector,

To be reluctant still would be a crime ;
 He would himself persuade you to comply.

Andro. How !——would'st thou give me *Pyrrhus* for
 a husband ?

Ceph. Think you 'twill please the ghost of your
 dead husband,

That you should sacrifice his son ? consider
Pyrrhus once more invites you to a throne,
 Turns all his pow'r against the foes of *Troy*,

Remember

36 THE DISTRESS'D MOTHER.

Remembers not *Achilles* was his father,
Retracts his conquests, and forgets his hatred.

Andro. But how can I forget it! how can I
Forget my *Hector*, treated with dishonour,
Depriv'd of funeral rites, and vilely dragg'd,
A bloody corse, about the walls of *Troy*?
Can I forget the good old king, his father,
Slain in my presence! at the altar slain!
Which vainly, for protection, he embrac'd?
Hast thou forgot that dreadful night, *Cephis*,
When a whole people fell? methinks I see
Pyrrhus, enrag'd and breathing vengeance, enter
Amidst the glare of burning palaces:
I see him hew his passage through my brothers,
And, bath'd in blood, lay all my kindred waste.
Think, in this scene of horror, what I suffer'd!
This is the courtship I receiv'd from *Pyrrhus*,
And this the husband thou would'st give me! no,
We both will perish first! I'll ne'er consent.

Ceph. Since you resolve *Astyanax* shall die,
Haste to the temple; bid your son farewell.
Why do you tremble, Madam?

Andro. Oh *Cephis*!
Thou hast awaken'd all the mother in me.
How can I bid farewell to the dear child,
The pledge, the image of my much-lov'd Lord!
Alas, I call to mind the fatal day,
When his too forward courage led him forth
To seek *Achilles*!

Ceph. Oh, th' unhappy hour!
'Twas then *Troy* fell, and all her gods forsook her.

Andro. That morn, *Cephis*, that ill-fated morn,
My husband bid thee bring *Astyanax*;
He took him in his arms, and, as I wept,
My wife, my dear *Andromache*, said he,
(Heaving with stifled sighs to see me weep)
What fortune may attend my arms the gods
Alone can tell. To thee I give the boy,
Preserve him as the token of our loves;

THE DISTRESS'D MOTHER. 37

If I should fall, let him not miss his fire
While thou surviv'st; but, by thy tender care,
Let the son see that thou didst love his father.

Ceph. And will you throw away a life so precious?
At once extirpate all the *Trojan* line?

Andro. Inhuman king! what has he done to suffer?
If I neglect your vows is he to blame?

Has he reproach'd you with his slaughter'd kindred?
Can he resent those ills he does not know?——

But, Oh! while I deliberate he dies.

No, no, thou must not die, while I can save thee:

Oh! let me find out *Pyrrhus*—Oh *Cephisa*!

Do thou go find him.

Ceph. What must I say to him?

Andro. Tell him I love my son to such excess——
But dost thou think he means the child shall die?
Can love rejected turn to so much rage?

Ceph. Madam, he'll soon be here——resolve on
something.

Andro. Well, then, assure him——

Ceph. Madam, of your love?

Andro. Alas! thou know'st that is not in my pow'r.
Oh my dead Lord! Oh *Priam's* royal house!

Oh my *Asiyanax*! at what a price

Thy mother buys thee!—let us go.

Ceph. But whither?

And what does your unsettled heart resolve?

Andro. Come, my *Cephisa*, let us go together
To the sad monument which I have rais'd
To *Hector's* shade, where, in their sacred urn,
The ashes of my hero ly inclos'd,
The dear remains which I have sav'd from *Troy*;
There let me weep, there summon to my aid,
With pious rites, my *Hector's* awful shade:
Let him be witness to my doubts, my fears,
My agonizing heart, my flowing tears:
Oh! may he rise, in pity, from his tomb,
And fix his wretched son's uncertain doom.

A C T.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

ANDROMACHE and CEPHISA.

CEPHISA.

BLEST be the tomb of *Hector* that inspires
Those pious thoughts ! or is it *Hector's* self
That prompts you to preserve your son ! 'tis he,
Who still presides o'er ruin'd *Troy* ; 'tis he,
Who urges *Pyrrhus* to restore *Ashtanax*.

Andro. *Pyrrhus* has said he will : and thou hast
heard him

Just now renew the oft-repeated promise.

Ceph. Already, in the transports of his heart,
He gives you up his kingdom, his allies,
And thinks himself o'erpaid for all in you.

Andro. I think I may rely upon his promise :
And yet my heart is overcharg'd with grief.

Ceph. Why should you grieve ? you see he bids
defiance

To all the *Greeks*, and, to protect your son
Against their rage, has plac'd his guards about him,
Leaving himself defenceless for his sake :
But, Madam, think the coronation-pomps
Will soon demand your presence in the temple :
'Tis time you lay aside these mourning-weeds.

Andro. I will be there ; but first would see my son.

Ceph. Madam, you need not now be anxious for him ;
He will be always with you, all your own,
To lavish the whole mother's fondness on him.
What a delight to train beneath your eye
A son who grows no longer up in bondage ?
A son in whom a race of kings revives ?

But,

But, Madam, you are sad, and wrapt in thought,
As if you relish'd not your happiness.

Andro. Oh, I must see my son once more, *Cephisa*!

Ceph. Madam, he now will be no more a captive,
Your visits may be frequent as you please :
To-morrow you may pass the live-long day——

Andro. To-morrow! Oh *Cephisa*!—but, no more!
Cephisa, I have always found thee faithful :
A load of care weighs down my drooping heart.

Ceph. Oh! that 'twere possible for me to ease you.

Andro. I soon shall exercise thy long-try'd faith.—
Mean while I do conjure thee, my *Cephisa*,
Thou take no notice of my present trouble :
And, when I shall disclose my secret purpose,
That thou be punctual to perform my will.

Ceph. Madam, I have no will but yours. My life
Is nothing balanc'd with my love to you.

Andro. I thank thee, good *Cephisa* ; my *Astyanax*
Will recompense thy friendship to his mother.
But, come, my heart's at ease : assist me now
To change this sable habit.—Yonder comes
Hermione : I would not meet her rage.

SCENE II.

HERMIONE and CLEONE.

Cle. This unexpected silence, this reserve,
This outward calm, this settled frame of mind,
After such wrongs and insults, much surprise me!
You who before could not command your rage
When *Pyrrhus* look'd but kindly on his captive,
How can you bear unmov'd that he should wed her,
And set her on a throne which you should fill?
I fear this dreadful stillness in your soul!
'Twere better, Madam——

Her. Have you call'd *Orestes*?

Cle. Madam, I have. His love is too impatient
Not to obey with speed the welcome summons.

His

40 THE DISTRESS'D MOTHER.

His love-sick heart o'erlooks his unkind usage :
His ardor's still the same—Madam, he's here.

S C E N E III.

ORESTES, HERMIONE, CLEONE.

Orest. Ah, Madam, is it true ? does then *Orestes*
At length attend you by your own commands ?
What can I do——

Her. *Orestes*, do you love me ?

Orest. What means that question, princess ? do I love
you ?

My oaths, my perjuries, my hopes, my fears,
My farewell, my return, all speak my love.

Her. Avenge my wrongs, and I believe them all.

Orest. It shall be done——my soul has catch'd
th' alarm,

We'll spirit up the *Greeks*——I'll lead them on :
Your cause shall animate our fleets and armies.
Let us return : let us not lose a moment,
But urge the fate of this devoted land :
Let us depart.

Her. No, prince, let us stay here !
I will have vengeance here—I will not carry
This load of infamy to *Greece*, nor trust
The chance of war to vindicate my wrongs.
Ere I depart I'll make *Epirus* mourn.
If you avenge me, let it be this instant ;
My rage brooks no delay—haste to the temple,
Haste, prince, and sacrifice him.

Orest. Whom ?

Her. Why, *Pyrrhus*.

Orest. *Pyrrhus* ? did you say *Pyrrhus* ?

Her. You demurr !

Oh fly, be gone ! give me not time to think !
Talk not of laws——he tramples on all laws——
Let me not hear him justify'd——away.

Orest.

THE DISTRESS'D MOTHER. 41

Orest. You cannot think I'll justify my rival.
 Madam, your love has made him criminal.
 You shall have vengeance ; I'll have vengeance too :
 But let our hatred be profess'd and open ;
 Let us alarm all *Greece*, denounce a war ;
 Let us attack him in his strength, and hunt him down
 By conquest : should I turn a base assassin
 'Twould fully all the kings I represent.

Her. Have not I been dishonour'd ? set at nought ?
 Expos'd to public scorn ?——and will you suffer
 The tyrant, who dares use me thus, to live ?
 Know, prince, I hate him more than once I lov'd him.
 The gods alone can tell how once I lov'd him ;
 Yes, the false perjur'd man, I once did love him ;
 And, spite of all his crimes and broken vows,
 If he should live, I may relapse——who knows
 But I to-morrow may forgive his wrongs ?

Orest. First let me tear him piece-meal—he shall die.
 But, Madam, give me leisure to contrive
 The place, the time, the manner of his death.
 Yet I'm a stranger in the court of *Pyrrhus* ;
 Scarce have I set my foot within *Epirus*
 When you enjoin me to destroy the prince.
 It shall be done this very night.

Her. But now,
 This very hour he weds *Andromache* ;
 The temple shines with pomp ; the golden throne
 Is now prepar'd ; the joyful rites begin ;
 My shame is public—Oh be speedy, prince !
 My wrath's impatient—*Pyrrhus* lives too long !
 Intent on love, and heedless of his person,
 He covers with his guards the *Trojan* boy ;
 Now is the time ; assemble all your *Greeks* ;
 Mine shall assist them ; let their fury loose :
 Already they regard him as a foe.
 Be gone, *Orestes*——kill the faithless tyrant.
 My love shall recompense thy glorious deed.

42 THE DISTRESS'D MOTHER.

Orest. Consider, Madam——

Her. You mock my rage!

I was contriving how to make you happy.

Think you to merit by your idle sighs;

And not attest your love by one brave action?

Go, with your boasted constancy, and leave

Hermione to execute her own revenge!

I blush to think how my too easy faith

Has twice been baffled in one shameful hour!

Orest. Hear me but speak!——you know I'll die
to serve you!

Her. I'll go myself: I'll stab him at the altar,
Then drive the poniard, reeking with his blood,
Through my own heart. In death we shall unite:
Better to die with him, than live with you!

Orest. That were to make him blest'd, and me more
wretched:

Madam, he dies by me:——have you a foe,

And shall I let him live? my rival too?

Ere yon meridian sun declines, he dies:

And you shall say that I deserve your love.

Her. Go, prince, strike home and leave the rest to
me!

Let all your ships stand ready for our flight.

SCENE IV.

HERMIONE and CLEONE.

Cle. Madam, you'll perish in this bold attempt.

Her. Give me my vengeance I'm content to perish——

I was to blame to trust it with another:

In my own hands it had been more secure.

Orestes hates not *Pyrrhus* as I hate him:

I should have thrust the dagger home; have seen

The tyrant curse me with his parting breath,

And roll about his dying eyes, in vain,

To find *Andromache*, whom I would hide.

Oh,

Oh, would *Orestes*, when he gives the blow,
 Tell him he dies my victim!—haste, *Cleone*,
 Charge him to say, *Hermione's* resentments,
 Not those of *Greece*, have sentenc'd him to death.
 Haste, my *Cleone*! my revenge is lost
 If *Pyrrhus* knows not that he dies by me!

Cle. I shall obey your orders—but I see
 The king approach—who could expect him here?

Her. Oh fly! *Cleone*, fly! and bid *Orestes*
 Not to proceed a step before I see him.

SCENE V.

HERMIONE and PYRRHUS.

Pyr. Madam, I ought to shun an injur'd princess:
 Your distant looks reproach me; and I come
 Not to defend, but to avow my guilt.

Pyrrhus will ne'er approve his own injustice,
 Nor form excuses while his heart condemns him.
 I might perhaps alledge our warlike fires,
 Unknown to us, engag'd us to each other,
 And join'd our hearts by contract, not by love;
 But I detest such cobweb-arts: I own
 My father's treaty, and allow its force.
 I sent ambassadors to call you hither;
 Receiv'd you as my queen, and hop'd my oaths,
 So oft renew'd, might ripen into love.
 The gods can witness, Madam, how I fought
 Against *Andromache's* too fatal charms!
 And still I wish I had the pow'r to leave
 This *Trojan* Beauty and be just to you.
 Discharge your anger on this perjur'd man;
 For I abhor my crime, and should be pleas'd
 To hear you speak your wrongs aloud: no terms,
 No bitterness of wrath, nor keen reproach,
 Will equal half th' upbraidings of my heart.

Her. I find, Sir, you can be sincere: you scorn
 To act your crimes with fear, like other men.

44 THE DISTRESS'D MOTHER.

A hero should be bold ; above all laws ;
Be bravely false, and laugh at solemn ties.
To be perfidious shews a daring mind :
And you have nobly triumph'd o'er a maid !
To court me, to reject me, to return,
Then to forsake me for a *Phrygian* slave,
To lay proud *Troy* in ashes, then to raise
The son of *Hector* and renounce the *Greeks*,
Are actions worthy the great soul of *Pyrrhus*.

Pyr. Madam, go on ; give your resentments birth,
And pour forth all your indignation on me.

Her. 'Twould please your queen should I upbraid
your falshood,

Call you perfidious traitor, all the names
That injur'd virgins lavish on your sex ;
I should o'erflow with tears, and die with grief,
And furnish out a tale to sooth her pride :
But, Sir, I would not overcharge her joys.
If you would charm *Andromache*, recount
Your bloody battles, your exploits, your slaughters,
Your great achievements in her father's palace.
She needs must love the man who fought so bravely,
And in her fight slew half her royal kindred.

Pyr. With horror I look back on my past deeds !
I punish *Helen's* wrongs too far ; I shed
Too much of blood : but, Madam, *Helen's* daughter
Should not object those ills the mother caus'd.
However, I am pleas'd to find you hate me :
I was too forward to accuse myself :
The man who ne'er was lov'd can ne'er be false.
Obedience to a father brought you hither,
And I stood bound by promise to receive you,
But our desires were different ways inclin'd,
And you, I own, were not oblig'd to love me.

Her. Have I not lov'd you, then, perfidious man ?
For you I slighted all the *Grecian* princes,
Forsook my father's house, conceal'd my wrongs
When most provok'd, would not return to *Sparta*,

THE DISTRESS'D MOTHER. 45

In hopes that time might fix your wav'ring heart.
 I lov'd you when inconstant : and ev'n now,
 Inhuman king, while you pronounce my death,
 My heart still doubts if I should love or hate you ?
 But, Oh ! since you resolve to wed another,
 Defer your cruel purpose till to morrow,
 That I may not be here to grace her triumph :
 This is the last request I e'er shall make you. —
 See if the barbarous prince vouchsafes an answer !
 Go, then, to the lov'd *Phrygian* ! hence ! be gone !
 And bear to her those vows that once were mine :
 Go in defiance to th' avenging gods !
 Be gone ! the priest expects you at the altar —
 But, tyrant, have a care I come not thither.

SCENE VI.

PYRRHUS and PHOENIX.

Phæn. Sir, did you mind her threats ? your life's in danger :

'There is no trifling with a woman's rage :
 The *Greeks*, who swarm about the court, all hate you,
 Will treat you as their country's enemy,
 And join in her revenge ; besides, *Orestes*
 Still loves her to distraction. Sir, I beg —

Pyr. How ! *Phænix* — should I fear a woman's threats ?

A nobler passion takes up all my thought :
 I must prepare to meet *Andromache*.
 Dó thou place all my guards about her son :
 If she be safe *Pyrrhus* is free from fear.

SCENE VII.

PHOENIX alone.

Oh *Pyrrhus* ! Oh, what pity 'tis the gods,
 Who fill'd thy soul with ev'ry kingly virtue,

Form'd

46 THE DISTRESS'D MOTHER.

Form'd thee for empire and consummate greatness,
Should leave thee so expos'd to wild desires,
That hurry thee beyond the bounds of reason!
Such was *Achilles*: gen'rous, fierce, and brave,
Open, and undesigning, but impatient,
Undisciplin'd, and not to be controll'd.
I fear this whirl of passion, this career
That overbears reflexion and cool thought!
I tremble for the event!—but see, the queen,
Magnificent in royal pride, appears.
I must obey, and guard her son from danger.

SCENE VIII.

ANDROMACHE and CEPHISA.

Ceph. Madam, once more you look and move a queen!

Your sorrows are dispers'd, your charms revive,
And ev'ry faded beauty blooms anew.

Andro. Yet all is not as I could wish, *Cephisa*.

Ceph. You see the king is watchful o'er your son,
Decks him with princely robes, with guards surrounds him.

Astyanax begins to reign already.

Andro. *Pyrrhus* is nobly minded, and I fain
Wou'd live to thank him for *Astyanax*:
'Tis a vain thought—however, since my child
Has such a friend, I ought not to repine.

Ceph. These dark unfoldings of your soul perplex me:
What meant those floods of tears, those warm embraces,
As if you bid your son adieu for ever?
For heav'n's sake, Madam, let me know your griefs!
If you distrust my faith——

Andro. That were to wrong thee.
Oh, my *Cephisa*! this gay borrowed air,
This blaze of jewels, and this bridal-dress,
Are but mock-trappings to conceal my woe:
My heart still mourns; I still am *Hector's* widow.

Ceph.

THE DISTRESS'D MOTHER. 47

Ceph. Will you then break the promise giv'n to
Pyrrhus ;

Blow up his rage afresh, and blast your hopes ?

Andro. I thought, *Cephisa*, thou hadst known thy
mistrels,

Could'st thou believe I would be false to *Hector* ?

Fall off from such a husband, break his rest,

And call him to this hated light again,

To see *Andromache* in *Pyrrhus*' arms ?

Would *Hector*, were he living, and I dead,

Forget *Andromache*, and wed her foe ?

Ceph. I cannot guess what drift your thoughts pursue:
But, Oh ! I fear there's something dreadful in it.

Must then *Asiyanax* be doom'd to die,

And you to linger out a life in bondage ?

Andro. Nor this, nor that, *Cephisa*, will I bear ;

My word is past to *Pyrrhus*, his to me,

And I rely upon his promis'd faith.

Unequal as he is I know him well :

Pyrrhus is violent, but he is sincere,

And will perform beyond what he has sworn.

The *Greeks* will but incense him more ; their rage

Will make him cherish *Hector*'s son.

Ceph. Ah ! Madam,

Explain these riddles to my boding heart.

Andro. Thou may'st remember, for thou oft hast
heard me

Relate the dreadful vision which I saw

When first I landed captive in *Epirus*.

That very night, as in a dream I lay,

A ghastly figure, full of gaping wounds,

His eyes a-glare, his hair all stiff with blood,

Full in my sight thrice shook his head and groan'd.

I soon discern'd my slaughter'd *Hector*'s shade ;

But, Oh, how chang'd, ye gods ! how much unlike

The living *Hector* !—Loud he bid me fly !

Fly from *Achilles*' son ! then sternly frown'd,

And disappear'd : struck with the dreadful sound

I started and awaked.

Ceph.

48 THE DISTRESS'D MOTHER.

Ceph. But did he bid you
Destroy *Astyanax*?

Andro. *Cephisa*, I'll preserve him;
With my own life, *Cephisa*, I'll preserve him.

Ceph. What may these words so full of horror mean?

Andro. Know then the secret purpose of my soul:
Andromache will not be false to *Pyrrhus*,
Nor violate her sacred love to *Hector*.

This hour I'll meet the king; the holy priest
Shall join us and confirm our mutual vows;
This will secure a father to my child;
That done I have no farther use for life;
This pointed dagger, this determin'd hand,
Shall save my virtue and conclude my woes.

Ceph. Ah, Madam! recollect your scatter'd reason!
This fell despair ill suits your present fortunes.

Andro. No other stratagem can serve my purpose:
This is the sole expedient to be just
To *Hector*, to *Astyanax*, to *Pyrrhus*.
I soon shall visit *Hector*, and the shades
Of my great ancestors—*Cephisa*, thou
Wilt lend a hand to close thy mistress' eyes.

Ceph. Oh, never think that I will stay behind you!

Andro. No, my *Cephisa*, I must have thee live.
Remember thou did'st promise to obey,
And to be secret: wilt thou now betray me?
After thy long, thy faithful service, wilt thou
Refuse my last commands, my dying wish?
Once more, I do conjure thee, live for me!

Ceph. Life is not worth my care when you are gone.

Andro. I must commit into thy faithful hands
All that is dear and precious to my soul:
Live and supply my absence to my child.
All that remains of *Troy*, a future progeny
Of heroes, and a distant line of kings,
In him, is all intrusted to thy care.

Ceph. But, Madam, what will be the rage of
Pyrrhus
Defrauded of his promis'd happiness?

Andro.

THE DISTRESS'D MOTHER. 49

Andro. That will require thy utmost skill: observe
The first impetuous onsets of his grief;
Use ev'ry artifice to keep him steadfast;
Sometimes with tears thou may'st discourse of me;
Speak of our marriage; let him think I lov'd him:
Tell him my soul repos'd itself on him
When I resign'd my son to his protection.

Ceph. Oh for a spirit to support my grief!
Is there ought more before you go for ever?

Andro. Oh, my *Cephisa*! my swollen heart is full.
I have a thousand farewells to my son——
But tears break in—grief interrupts my speech——
My soul o'erflows in fondness—let him know
I died to save him:—and would die again.
Season his mind with early hints of glory;
Make him acquainted with his ancestors;
Trace out their shining story in his thoughts;
Dwell on the exploits of his immortal father;
And sometimes let him hear his mother's name;
Let him reflect upon his royal birth
With modest pride. *Pyrrhus* will prove a friend:
But let him know he has a conqueror's right.
He must be taught to stifle his resentments,
And sacrifice his vengeance to his safety;
Should he prove head-strong, rash, or unadvised,
He then will frustrate all his mother's virtue,
Provoke his fate, and I shall die in vain.

Ceph. Alas, I fear I never shall outlive you!

Andro. No more:—thy tears, *Cephisa*, will betray me:
Assume a chearful look: but still remember——

[*Flourish within.*]

Hark how the trumpet, with its sprightly notes,
Proclaims th' appointed hour, and calls us hence:
 Hector, I come, once more a queen, to join thee!
Thus the gay victim, with fresh garlands crown'd,
Pleas'd with the sacred fife's enlivening sound,
Through gazing crowds in solemn state proceeds,
And, drest in fatal pomp, magnificently bleeds.

G

A C T

ACT V. SCENE I.

HERMIONE *alone.*

WHAT have I done? where am I? where is
Pyrrhus?
 Ye gods! what mean these horrors?—I'm undone!
 My soul is on the rack—I cannot bear it——
 Why do I wander like some guilty ghost?
 What brought me to this place? what keeps me here?
 The court of *Pyrrhus* has no room for me?
 Do I still doubt if I should love or hate him?
 Hard-hearted man! how unconcern'd he left me!
 Did he once sigh? bestow one pitying look?
 Once shed a tear? or speak one soft kind word?
 Did he so much as feign one moment's sorrow
 To calm my griefs and mitigate his falshood?
 —Why am I still thus anxious for his life?
 Why do I start at his impending fate?
 Shall he then live? shall the base traitor live
 To laugh at my distress? No, let him perish!
 Be quick, *Orestes*!—execute my orders!
 Alas! my orders! Oh preposterous guilt!
 Can I decree the death of him I love?
 Was it for this my soul delighted in him?
 Was it for this I left my father's court?
 Have I then cross'd so many realms and seas
 To murder *Pyrrhus*?

SCENE II.

HERMIONE and CLEONE.

Her. Oh, *Cleone*, help me!
 What have I done? is *Pyrrhus* yet alive?
 What say'st thou—answer me! where is the king?

Cle.

Cle. Madam; I saw the cruel prince set forward,
Triumphant in his looks and full of joy.
Still, as he walk'd, his ravish'd eyes were fix'd
On the fair captive, while through shouting crowds
She pass'd along with a dejected air,
And seem'd to mourn her *Hector* to the last.

Her. Insulting tyrant! I shall burst with rage!——
But say, *Cleone*, didst thou mark him well?
Was his brow smooth? say, did there not appear
Some shade of grief? some little cloud of sorrow?
Did he not stop? did he not once look back?
Didst thou approach him? was he not confounded?
Did he not——Oh, be quick, and tell me all!

Cle. Madam, the tumult of his joy admits
No thought but love; unguarded he march'd on—
'Midst a promiscuous throng of friends and foes;
His cares all turn upon *Astyanax*,
Whom he has lodg'd within the citadel,
Defended by the strength of all his guards.

Her. Enough!—he dies!—the traitor!—where's
Orestes?

Cle. He is in the temple with his whole retinue.

Her. Is he still resolute? is he determin'd?

Cle. Madam, I fear——

Her. How!——is *Orestes* false?

Does he betray me too?

Cle. A thousand doubts

Perplex his soul, and wound him with remorse:

His virtue and his love prevail by turns,
He told me *Pyrrhus* should not fall ignobly;

Pyrrhus the warlike son of great *Achilles*;
He dreads the censure of the *Grecian* states,
Of all mankind, and fears to stain his honour.

Her. Poor timorous wretch! 'tis false! he basely
fears

To cope with dangers and encounter death:

'Tis that he fears!——am I bright *Helen's* daughter?
To

52 THE DISTRESS'D MOTHER.

To vindicate her wrongs all *Greece* conspired ;
For her confederate nations fought, and kings were
slain,

Troy was o'erthrown, and a whole empire fell.
My eyes want force to raise a lover's arm
Against a tyrant that has dar'd to wrong me !

Cle. Madam, like *Helen*, trust your cause to *Greece*.

Her. No, I'll avenge myself ; I'll to the temple,
I'll overturn the altar, stab the priest :
I'll hurl destruction like a whirlwind round me !
They must not wed ! they must not live ! they shall not !
Let me be gone ! I have no time to loose !
Stand off ! hold me not ! I am all distraction !
Oh *Pyrrhus* ! tyrant, traitor, thou shalt bleed.

SCENE III.

HERMIONE, CLEONE, ORESTES.

Orest. Madam, 'tis done ; your orders are obey'd :
The tyrant lyes expiring at the altar.

Her. Is *Pyrrhus* slain ?——

Orest. Ev'n now he gasps in death.
Our *Greeks*, all undistinguish'd in the crowd,
Flock'd to the temple and dispers'd themselves
On ev'ry side the altar : I was there :
Pyrrhus observ'd me with a haughty eye,
And, proud to triumph over *Greece* in me,
From his own brows he took the diadem,
And bound it on the temples of his captive.
Receive, said he, my crown, receive my faith,
Mine and my people's sov'reign reign for ever ;
From this bliss'd hour, a father to your son,
I'll scourge his foes : henceforeward be he stiled
The *Trojan* king. I swear it at the altar,
And call the gods to ratify my vows.
His subjects with loud acclamations shook
The spacious dome. Our *Greeks*, enrag'd, cry'd out
Revenge !

THE DISTRESS'D MOTHER. 53

Revenge! revenge! broke through the thronging press,
And rush'd tumultuous on th' unguarded king.
Their eager fury left no work for me.

Pyrrhus a while oppos'd their clashing swords,
And dealt his fatal blows, on ev'ry side,
With manly fierceness, till oppress'd by numbers,
Streaming with blood, all over gash'd with wounds,
He reel'd, he groan'd, and at the altar fell.
Haste, Madam: let us fly! haste to our ships!
They lye unmoor'd: our friends attend us there.

Her. What have they done!

Orest. Madam, forgive their rage,
I own your vengeance had been more compleat
Had *Pyrrhus* fallen by me, and had he known
Hermione chastis'd him by my arm.

Her. Peace, monster, peace!—go tell thy horrid tale
To savages, and howl it out in desarts.
Would'st thou impute to me thy barbarous guilt?
Me would'st thou make th' accomplice of thy crimes?
Hence to thy *Greeks* and boast thy foul exploits!
My soul abhors them! I disclaim the deed!
Be gone! I know thee not! thou fell barbarian!
What had he done? what could provoke thy madness
To assassinate so great, so brave a man?
Who set thee on?

Orest. O, grant me patience, heav'n!
With your own lips did you not curse the tyrant,
Pronounce his death, and urge me to destroy him?

Her. What if, transported by my boundless passion,
I could not bear to see him wed another?
Were you to obey a jealous woman's phrenzy?
You should have div'd into my inmost thoughts;
My heart, tho' full of rage, was free from malice,
And all my anger was excess of love,
Why did you take me at my word? you saw
The struggles of my soul; you heard me rave;
You should have question'd me a thousand times;
Yet still have doubted, and still question'd on,
Before you ventur'd on a life so precious.

Orest.

54 THE DISTRESS'D MOTHER.

Orest. Hear me but speak: —heav'n knows,
against my will——

Her. Why did you not return? why not consult me
A second time, and, undetermin'd still,
Again return, and still find new delays?
What had your rash officious *Greeks*, dire blood-hounds,
To do with my revenge? what drew you hither
To bring on me the vengeful woes that haunt you?
Are these the fruits of your detested love?
Your fatal embassy, your hateful presence
Drove *Pyrrhus* to my rival, and destroys
Both him and me.—He might have lov'd me still
Had you ne'er interpos'd———avant! be gone,
And leave me in *Epirus*———I renounce
My friends, my country, *Greece* and all mankind,
But chiefly I renounce thee, monster! thee!

SCENE IV.

ORESTES.

Am I awake! where am I! soft, my soul,
Be not too rash—was that *Hermione*?
Why should her anger thunder against me?
Was not this blood shed all by her command?——
I am indeed a most outrageous monster!
A ruffian, murderer, a base assassin!
And all to please a false ungrateful woman.
Henceforward let all the laws of nations cease,
And let the pale, that severs right and wrong,
Things sacred and profane, be broken down:
Gods in their temples, kings upon their thrones,
Are not in safety while *Orestes* lives.
Oh, never more shall my torn mind be heal'd,
Nor taste the gentle comforts of repose!
A dreadful band of gloomy cares surround me,
And lay strong siege to my distracted soul.

SCENE

SCENE V.

ORESTES and PYLADES attended by GREEKS.

Pyl. Haste, prince, let us be gone : 'tis death to stay.

Andromache reigns queen, she gives the alarm,

And vows revenge upon the foes of *Pyrrhus*.

The people arm and muster in the streets :

Our *Greeks* will not be able long to guard

The palace-gates, and to secure our flight.

We must be speedy, Sir.

Orest. You may depart,

My friends——*Hermione* and I remain.——

Her cruelty has quite undone me !——go,

And leave me to myself——I'll find her out.

Pyl. Alas, unhappy princess !——she's no more :

Forget her, Sir, and save yourself with us.

Orest. *Hermione* no more !——O all ye pow'rs !

Pyl. Full of disorder, wildness in her looks,

With hands expanded and dishevell'd hair,

Breathless and pale, with shrieks she fought the temple:

In the mid way she met the corps of *Pyrrhus* ;

She startled at the sight, then, stiff with horror,

Gaz'd frightful, waken'd, from the dire amaze ;

She rais'd her eyes to heav'n with such a look

As spoke her sorrows and reproach'd the gods,

Then plung'd a poniard deep within her breast,

And fell on *Pyrrhus*, grasping him in death.

Orest. I thank you, gods—I never could expect

To be so wretched !——you have been industrious

To finish your decrees, to make *Orestes*

A dreadful instance of your pow'r to punish.

I'm singled out to bear the wrath of heav'n.

Pyl. You hazard your retreat by these delays.

The guards will soon beset us. Your complaints

Are vain, and may be fatal.

Orest. True, my friend ;

And therefore 'twas I thank'd the bounteous gods.

My

56 THE DISTRESS'D MOTHER.

My fate's accomplish'd—I shall die content.

Oh bear me hence!—blow, winds!—

Pyl. Let us be gone.

Orest. The murder'd lovers wait me—hark! they call!

Nay, if your blood still reeks, I'll mingle mine.

One tomb will hold us all.

Pyl. Alas! I fear

His ravings will return with his misfortunes.

Orest. I'm dizzy!—clouds!—quite lost in utter darkness!

Guide me, some friendly pilot, through the storm.

I shiver! Oh, I freeze!—so:—light returns;

'Tis the gray dawn—see, *Pylades*! behold!—

I am encompass'd with a sea of blood!—

The crimson billows!—Oh! my brain's on fire!

Pyl. How is it, Sir!—repose yourself on me.

Orest. *Pyrrhus*, stand off! what would'st thou?—
how he glares!

What envious hand has clos'd thy wounds?—have at thee.

It is *Hermione* that strikes—confusion!

She catches *Pyrrhus* in her arms—h, save me!

How terrible she looks!—the mists her brow!

She frowns me dead! she frights me into madness!

Where am I?—who are you?

Pyl. Alas, poor prince!

Help to support him.—How he pants for breath!

Orest. This is most kind, my *Pylades*.—Oh, why,
Why was I born to give thee endless trouble?

Pyl. All will go well: he settles into reason.

Orest. Who talks of reason? better to have none
Than not enough.—Run, some one, tell my *Greeks*,
I will not have them touch the king.—now!—now!
I blaze again!—see there!—look where they come!
A shoal of furies!—how they swarm about me!
My terror!—hide me!—Oh, their snaky locks!
Hark! how they hiss!—see! see their flaming brands!
Now they let drive full at me! how they grin

And

THE DISTRESS'D MOTHER. 57

And shake their iron-whips!—My ears! what yelling!
 And see *Hermione*!—she sets them on!—
 Thrust not your scorpions thus into my bosom!
 Oh!—I am stung to death!—dispatch me soon!
 There—take my heart, *Hermione*!—tear it out!
 Disjoint me!—kill me!—Oh my tortur'd soul!—
Py. Kind heav'n restore him to his wonted calm!
 Oft have I seen him rave, but never thus:
 Quite spent!—assist me, friends, to bear him off.
 Our time is short; should his strong rage return
 'Twould be beyond our pow'r to force him hence.
 Away, my friends!—I hear the portal open.

SCENE VI.

PHOENIX attended by GUARDS.

All, all are fled!—*Orestes* is not here!—
 Triumphant villains!—the base giddy rabble,
 Whose hands should all have been employ'd with fire
 To waste the fleet, flock'd round the dying princess,
 And, while they stand agaze, the *Greeks* embark.
 Oh, 'tis too plain!—this sacrilegious murder
 Was authoris'd.—th' ambassador's escape
 Declares his guilt.—Most bloody embassy!
 Most unexampled deed! where, where ye gods,
 Is majesty secure, if in your temples
 You give it no protection?—see, the queen.

SCENE VII.

PHOENIX, ANDROMACHE, CEPHISA, with Attendants.

Andro. Yes, ye inhuman *Greeks*! the time will come
 When you shall dearly pay your bloody deeds!
 How should the *Trojans* hope for mercy from you,
 When thus you turn your impious rage on *Pyrrhus*!
Pyrrhus the bravest man in all your league,

H

The

58 THE DISTRESS'D MOTHER.

The man whose single valour made you triumph ?
Is my child there ?—

Ceph. It is the corps of *Pyrrhus*;

The weeping foldiers bear him on their shields.

Andro. Ill-fated prince ! too negligent of life !

And too unwary of the faithless *Greeks* !

Cut off in the fresh ripening prime of manhood,

Ev'n in the pride of life, thy triumphs new,

And all thy glories in full blossom round thee !

The very *Trojans* would bewail thy fate.

Ceph. Alas, then will your sorrows never end !

Andro. Oh, never ! never—while I live my tears

Will never cease, for I was born to grieve.—

Give present orders for the funeral pomps : [*To Phoenix.*

Let him be rob'd in all his regal state,

Place round him every shining mark of honour,

And let the pile, that consecrates his ashes,

Rise like his fame, and blaze above the clouds.

S C E N E VIII.

ANDROMACHE and CEPHISA, with Attendants.

Ceph. That sound proclaims th' arrival of the prince:
The guards conduct him from the citadel.

Andro. With open arms I'll meet him !—Oh, *Cephisa*!

A springing joy, mix'd with a soft concern,

A pleasure which no language can express,

An ecstasy that mothers only feel,

Plays round my heart, and brightens up my sorrow

Like gleams of sun-shine in a lowering sky.

Tho' plung'd in ills and exercis'd in care,

Yet never let the noble mind despair.

When press'd by dangers, and beset with foes,

The gods their timely succour interpose ;

And when our virtue sinks, o'erwhelm'd with grief,

By unforeseen expedients bring relief.

E P I



EPILOGUE.

Written by Mr. Budgell of the Inner-Temple,

Spoken by Mrs. OLDFIELD.

I Hope you'll own that, with becoming Art,
I've play'd my game, and topp'd the Widow's Part.
My Spouse, poor Man! could not live out the Play,
But died commodiously on Wedding-Day,
While I, his Relict, made, at one bold Fling,
Myself a Princess, and young Sty a King.

Ye Ladies who protract a Lover's Pain,
And hear your Servants sigh whole Years in Vain,
Which of you all would not on Marriage venture
Might she so soon upon her Jointure enter?

'Twas a strange Scape! had Pyrrhus liv'd till now,
I had been finely hamper'd in my Vow.

To die by one's own Hand, and fly the Charms
Of Love and Life in a young Monarch's Arms!

'Twere an hard fate—ere I had undergone it
I might have took one Night—to think upon it.

But why, you'll say, was all this Grief express'd
For a first Husband laid long since at Rest?

Why so much Coldness to my kind Protector?

—Ab Ladies! had you known the good Man Hector!

Homer will tell you, (or I'm misinform'd)

That when, enrag'd, the Grecian Camp he storm'd,

To break the ten-fold Barriers of the Gate,

He threw a Stone of such prodigious Weight,

As no two Men could lift, not ev'n of those

Who in that Age of thund'ring Mortals rose:

—It would have sprain'd a Dozen modern Beaux.

At length, howe'er, I laid my Weeds aside,

And sunk the Widow in the well-dress'd Bride.

In you it still remains to grace the Play,

And bless with Joy my Coronation-Day:

Take then, ye Circles of the Brave and Fair,

The Fatherless and Widow to your Care.

F I N I S.



